

Tower I declare this tower is my symbol

In 1917, Yeats found the uninhabited Ballylee Castle and bought it for £35, renaming it Thoor Ballylee. Using local craftsmen and materials, the tower and surrounding cottages were restored to their former glory and from grey Galway stone Yeats made a monumental poetic symbol. Thoor Ballylee features in numerous resonant poems from Yeats's books **The Tower** (1928) and **The Winding Stair** (1933). The Yeats family lived there most summers until 1929.



Tree Tree like a sooty finger

Trees were rooted deep in Yeats's poetry. Observation of trees in the west transformed his symbolism. Some trees grow in mind as much as in soil, and different species take on different meanings. Trees are cultivated for future generations: the planting and felling of species not native to Ireland becomes in 'Coole Park 1929' an allegory for the fragility of such traditions. Single trees increasingly take centre stage, whether as an image of unity or of disunity, as in the late play **Purgatory** (1939).



Revolution bloody, savage, and intimate

The story of Ireland's revolution also begins in the west. Yeats's play **Cathleen ni Houlihan** (1902) was a thinly-veiled allegory of the 1798 rebellion, and the western revival of language, literature and culture undoubtedly stimulated a national consciousness. Some leaders of the rising were poets, and the Easter 1916 rising in Dublin was staged almost like a theatrical event. Later the Civil War came to Yeats's door, haunting several important poems.



Wild West

America provided a ready, if conservative, audience for all things Irish. As his reputation grew, W.B. Yeats found he could conduct lucrative speaking tours there. Tours by the Abbey Theatre players were not far behind and throughout the 1930s the Abbey players criss-crossed the continent from east to west and back again. Abbey actors made their way as far as Hollywood, featuring in many films by Irish-American western director John Ford. **The Quiet Man** (1952) features John Wayne and Abbey actors in a return to west of Ireland landscapes.

Death & Life Cast a cold eye

Late in life Yeats came west less and less yet his mind still played on western images and songs. He died in France in January 1939, and after the war was over was buried in Drumcliff, Sligo. His brother Jack B. Yeats then followed family tradition with an astonishing late flowering. His daughter Anne Yeats became an accomplished artist, and his daughter-in-law Gráinne Yeats became a leading practitioner of the Irish harp. Poets and writers east and west from Seamus Heaney to Elisabeth Bishop followed the resonant example of Yeats's poetry, and his life and work continue to provide inspiration today.

